

Amesbury Open Space, Natural Resources, and Trails Committee

MEETING AGENDA

April 28, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

This meeting was conducted under the "Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law" G.L. c. 30A, Section 20, signed on March 12, 2020.

Present: Jonathan Sherwood, John Lopez, Rob Desmarais, V. Johnson-Hall, Councilor Wheeler, P. Rettig, S. Thiel

1. Call to Order 7:01
2. Minutes from March 24 and March 29 meetings: N. Wheeler moved to approve minutes as presented. S. Thiel 2nd. All approved.
3. Public Comment - N/A
4. Communications – reminder to complete Annual Conflict of Interest Training.
5. Chair's Report
 - AIA was awarded Essex National Heritage Partnership Grant for new kiosk
 - Follow-up to Tax Title Takings Inventory Project for City: Mayor asked us to convert recommendations into a draft order. Recommendation was for parcels to be permanently preserved through designation as Article 97 under care, custody & control of Conservation Commission. Jonathan prepared draft order to transfer parcels from Tax Collector to City for General Municipal Purposes, then for City to permanently preserve; V. Johnson-Hall and J. Sherwood met with A. Cleveland to review draft order for City Council. N. Wheeler to follow up with Mayor on including former Quinn properties with Article 97 designation for passive rec and conservation purposes.
6. Special Guests/Presentations: City of Amesbury NOI for Lake Gardner Beach – Rob Desmarais, DPW
 - J. Sherwood – context: DPW requested that OSNRT review NOI for annual replenishment of sand to Lake Gardner Beach to provide feedback. No in OSNRT purview to review NOI's for regulatory compliance, but rather how fits in with stewardship of Lake Gardner component in OSRP. This has been in progress with City and LGIA over years to make improvements to the beach as recreational asset. Thus far retaining wall installed with drainage catchment completed a year ago. There was a study done on freshwater mussels in the lake and potential impact of sand replenishment on mussels.
 - R. Desmarais – Looking for consensus that this is the plan that want to submit. Intent is to restore beach -take out grass up to where forest begins. Will have to remove grass and bring in sand. Asking to do that one-time to restore to condition was prior to 2010.
 - V. Johnson-Hall – how does this dovetail with ecologist that Bruce McBrien consulted with regarding beach management?
 - J. Sherwood – Elements about vegetation not in NOI. NOI pre-dated the consultant's ecological report.
 - R. Desmarais – LGIA and Lakes & Waterways submitted beach management plan in January. Lobbied City Council to implement plan; did study on impact of mussels. Withdrawn because of lack of quorum on Cons Comm.
 - J. Lopez: Order of Conditions good for 3 years, so would allow sand replacement annually for 3 years.
 - R. Desmarais showed aerial photo of what beach used to look like and what would like to restore it to. All grass, problems with insects in grass (bees).
 - There are no funds to re-do NOI. LGIA has written letter to support as has Lakes & Waterways. Thought is to submit and see if Cons Comm will accept. There were erosion problems that have

been fixed. If we continue to see erosion, would like to revisit. If this is intended as short-term management fix, then Committee members in support.

- S. Thiel – From rec & open space perspective, would be terrific to have beach restored. We need to be mindful of impact on endangered mussel.
- J. Sherwood – OSNRT survey concluded that Lake Gardner was highly valued, highly used, in need of attention, deserving of more City resources and investment to maintain. OSNRT mentioned need to upgrade facilities and beach, and set goal/ action item of implementing Lake Gardner Beach Management Plan. Quality of water resources – including Lake Gardner – ties into climate resiliency. Intent of NOI in context of all improvements that have been made were all aiming at this point with understanding that investments were being made so that we could continue to make improvements to this asset, including the beach. What happens if NOI is rejected by Conservation Commission?
- Plan is 2 years old, studies expire in a year. If don't submit, would have to re-do, rethink direction.
- Sediment in lake is not being addressed; there are enforcement orders against private beaches. Rationale is that can eliminate private beaches with opportunity for one beach. But still a significant amount of sediment in the lake. Plan as proposed not consistent with enhancing ecological integrity of the lake; consultant felt that hybrid approach was better. But there are no funds for that. Cons Comm could commission peer review with endangered species biologist. Cons Comm works with applicants to bring applicants into compliance.

Motion: Move that OSNRT support NOI as written, but in the context of the 2027 OSRP, but strongly encourage LGIA and Lakes & Waterways to not let this supplant more comprehensive beach management plan in the future that considers the ecological health of the Lake, the Powwow River, and surrounding natural areas. Move V. Johnson-Hall, 2nd N. Wheeler. 5 approve, 1 abstain. Motion passes.

7. Referrals – None at this time

8. Ongoing Projects: OSR 2020-21 Action Plan

i. Trails Planning – Sherwood

- No updates.

ii. Town Forest & Woodsom Farm Protections – Wheeler/Lennon

- J. Sherwood checked in with Councilor Stanganelli, as Tax-title Taking list included 2 parcels that are contiguous with Town Forest. Councilor Stanganelli has not made progress on protections of Town Forest, but happy to have these 2 parcels included in Tax Title list to be protected by Article 97.
- Woodsom Farm: Change would be to update designation to restrict some areas to passive recreation only. Likely no update until July.

iii. Outreach to Other Boards/Committees – Open Space Forum Part Two - Sherwood

- J. Sherwood spoke with City and Chair of L&W; in interim, City requested a presentation for City staff and any interested Board & Committee members on Conservation Options. Tentatively looking at 5th week of June.

iv. Criteria and Methods for Permanently Protected Land Required as Part of a Development Permit

- V Johnson-Hall summarized. Discussion centered on how permanent preservation of open space gets enforced. P. Rettig will follow up on that and report at next meeting.

9. Other Business – N/A

Motion to Adjourn 8:37 by V. Johnson-Hall. 2nd N. Wheeler. All approved.